



HEARD ACROSS MONTANA

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Joint Resolution Signed

By E. Wing Spooner espooner@mt.gov

The Billings City Council met in chambers at the Billings City Hall on Monday, January 14. PSSB staff person, Pete Mohan, was in attendance. Mayor Ron Tussing and the City Council approved a joint resolution with Yellowstone County for participation in the State-Wide Radio System. The joint resolution indicates that the county and City of Billings will work toward a cost-effective and efficient interoperable communications system for the purpose of public safety.

Last October, four Yellowstone County and Billings City officials attended an Interoperability Policy Academy sponsored by the National Association of Counties (NACo) and the National League of Cities (NLC) in San Francisco, CA. Attendees included Jim Reno, Yellowstone County Commissioner; Larry Brewster, Billings City Council; Sheriff Chuck Maxwell; and Billings Fire Chief Marv Jochems. Mayor Ron Tussing also attended the National Governor's Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices 50-state interoperability meeting in Los Angeles in March, 2007.

The conferences were designed to provide state and local government leaders and first responders a better understanding of what elected officials need to know to help them establish the structure and policies to improve interoperability, including a strong governance structure and appropriate policies.

Billings and Yellowstone county officials appreciated the opportunity to attend the conferences. The background information on interoperability contributed to the preparation of the joint resolution.

Interoperability Montana Technical Committee Meeting

By Scott Bradford sbradford@mt.gov

The Interoperability Montana Technical Committee (IMTC) held a face-to-face meeting on Monday, January 14, at the State Capitol in Helena. The group employed the use of internet video and voice conferencing applications to allow those who couldn't travel to fully participate in the meeting. Based on feedback, participants indicated that this technology will be utilized at all face-to-face meetings.

The primary business of the committee was the final evaluation and prioritization of trunking sites to

allocate the funding set aside in the budget for trunking deployment. That budget was approved by the IMPD on January 8. The IMTC had previously developed a master list of sites that would likely be upgraded to trunking in the near or distance future. After evaluating criteria such as infrastructure development, subscriber unit status, dispatch capability and network connection, the committee arrived at a consensus priority list for use of current and prospective 2008 funds. This list will be provided to the IMPD and IM Finance Sub-Committee.

The IMTC also addressed several other important issues. The State of Montana, Public Safety Services Bureau (PSSB), is currently funding an evaluation of potential sites to house the second master control site planned for eastern Montana in 2009. PSSB requested the IMTC to provide a final candidate list of sites to be evaluated. The IMTC requested PSSB to send notification to project directors regarding this request, and have each consortium board member send candidate sites to PSSB that will be then approved by the IMPD.

Jack Spillman, Lewis and Clark County Radio Administrator, and Scott Bradford, PSSB, with assistance from the Frequency Sub-Committee, presented the draft Subscriber Unit Acceptance Criteria. This is necessary to have an effective process to evaluate and approve radios that will effectively work with the current Motorola trunking system. After review, the IMTC requested additional time to review the document and asked that comments be submitted to PSSB in the next two weeks. Then the document will be re-distributed. Recommendations will be presented to the IM Governance Committee for development of a formal policy.

The IMTC also approved the Frequency Sub-Committee to focus on spectrum searches and licensing along the I-90 and I-94 Corridor, including the Billings area. The Sub-Committee is already drafting a plan for utilization of the Montana-owned VPC frequencies for this region. In addition, the committee preferred that the Frequency Sub-Committee establish a separate FCC registry number for Interoperability Montana, under the State of Montana with a local representative of the Frequency Sub-Committee as the contact. This action will be completed when the IMPD receives its tax ID number.

The next face-to-face meeting is scheduled for February 25 in Helena, beginning at 9:00 am.



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South Central Montana Consortium Meeting

By Pete Mohan pmohan@mt.gov

The South Central Montana Interoperability Consortium (SCMIC) met at the Livingston County Courthouse on Jan. 16. Kerry O'Connell, SCMIC Chairperson, opened the meeting and the group approved the preceding month's minutes. Madison, Gallatin, Park, and Sweet Grass progress reports were discussed. Jason Shrauger, SCMIC Project Director presented the board with a report of the Interoperability Montana Project Directors Board (IMPD), the Interoperability Montana Technical Committee (IMTC), and Interoperability Montana Governance Committee (IMGC) meeting minutes and discussed their implications to SCMIC.

Jason requested the group evaluate the need to determine a new SCMIC Project Director and Technical Committee representative at the next meeting. He also reported that the Gallatin County Rural Fire Department submitted a communications grant. Jason also indicated that the IM Network map of communications sites is subject to change based on changing conditions at proposed sites. Tom Smith, Northrop Grumman, reported on the current status of SCMIC sites using the new site specific reporting tool.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 pm; the next meeting will be held in Bozeman at the Emergency Operations Center on February 13 at 10:00 am.

I-15/90 Corridor Consortium Meeting

By E. Wing Spooner espooner@mt.gov

The I-15/90 Corridor Interoperability Consortium met Thurs., Jan 17, in Butte. Project Director Dave McPherson briefly updated the group about the January 4 meeting that took place about the FEMA Fire Grant. A final decision was made on the allocation of radio equipment among consortia members. Dave reported that PSSB is working on a security plan which is needed before state funds can be released. Also, formal accounting processes are taking place at the state level, so matching money will be available between 60 and 90 days from now.

Bob McWilliams reported that the consortium is still waiting on frequencies for Red Mountain and the Butte-Silver Bow 9-1-1 Center that were submitted to the FCC a year and a half ago. These are needed no later than February in order to have the combiners manufactured in time.

Bob also presented the prioritized list of trunking sites that the IMTC decided on during its last meeting as well as the latest budget summary. Discussion took place about steps needed to have the Anaconda Fire Hall site added to the list.

In addition, Bob reported that he and Sheriff John Walsh were appointed to the IM Finance Sub-Committee. In addition, Bob provided an update about the state frequency plan, a draft document for defining the roles and responsibilities of licensing and operating new public safety radio frequencies, and copies of the draft radio acceptance criteria that will define which brands of radios will be approved for use on the IM Project. Additionally, he informed the group that the cost of a building permit will be the responsibility of local jurisdictions.

Bob recently carried out a generator test at Red Mountain, and everything performed properly. He emphasized that any additional work left to be conducted on the contract needs to be completed and paid to ensure that '05 HS funds are depleted by the end of June. Dave then reported on IMPD activities and accomplishments.

The next consortium meeting will begin at 10:00 am at the Butte-Silver Bow Chamber of Commerce, 1000 George St., on Thurs., Feb. 21.

Upcoming Meetings

January 22

Western Interoperability Consortium (WICC)

10:00 am

Location to TBD

January 23

Eastern Tier Consortium (ETIC)

Glendive • 10:00 am

Law Enforcement Center, 440 Colorado Boulevard

January 24

Big Sky 11

Billings • 9:00 – Noon

Yellowstone County Fire Station; 2305 8th Ave N.

January 28

IM Technical Committee Face-to-Face Meeting

Helena • 9:00 am - 3:00 pm • State Capitol

February 6

Central Montana Consortium (CMICC)

Great Falls • 10:00 am

Wheat Building; 750 6th Street SW

February 13

South Central Montana Consortium (SCMIC)

Bozeman • 10:00 am

Bozeman Emergency Operations Center

219 East Tamarack